

## LATE CHALCOLITHIC-PERIOD GROUNDSTONE VESSELS AND TOOLS FROM KAFR 'ANA, OR YEHUDA

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### INTRODUCTION

Nearly all of the groundstone finds from the excavation at the Neue Rabin neighborhood in Or Yehuda (see Arbel and Volynsky, this volume: Plans 1, 3) were found in Area B, in adjoining Sq 3–4 and 7–8. The exception is a near-complete basalt bowl (Fig. 1:1) found in Area A during mechanical probing, and therefore, without stratigraphic context.

The finds from Area B originated in a dense, homogenous sediment layer, immediately under the remains of an Ottoman–Mandate-period village (see Arbel and Volynsky, this volume). Although devoid of structural remains, these deposits did contain appreciable amounts of Late Chalcolithic-period pottery (see Yannai, this volume) and flints (see Yaroshevich, this volume), alongside an assemblage of nine groundstone tools, which are the subject of this article.

Most items derived from superimposed Loci 204 and 210 in Sq 3 and 4: L204 (31.30–31.90 m asl) was opened below the Ottoman–Mandate-period layer, and below it, L210 was opened for control, though no changes in soil color or texture were noticed from the previous locus. Locus 210 was excavated for another 20 cm (closing level of L204: 31.31 m asl; closing level of L210: 31.11 m asl). Poorly preserved clay lumps observed in the eastern section of L210 may have been deteriorated mud bricks.

### THE GROUNDSTONE ASSEMBLAGE

This small assemblage consists of four basalt bowls (Fig. 1); a fragment of a basalt lower grinding slab (Fig. 2:1); fragments of a grinding slab and a handstone, both possibly of quartzite (Fig. 2:2, 3, respectively); a thin, flat fragment of beachrock that may have been used as a lower grinding slab (Fig. 2:4); and an intact, carefully worked quartzite(?) pestle (Fig. 2:5).

#### *Basalt Bowls*

Late Chalcolithic-period basalt vessels, such as those from Or Yehuda are considered a hallmark of the Ghassulian culture (Amiran and Porat 1984; Rowan 1998). At least two of

the vessels (Fig. 1:1, 2) are simple, open-form bowls, with a flat base and straight walls; one is slightly larger than the other. Both can be ascribed to Rowan's (1998) Type 1, the most common type of Chalcolithic basalt vessel. A third vessel (Fig. 1:4) belongs to the class of fenestrated pedestalled basalt bowls (Rowan's Type 2), and more specifically, to Subtype 2B, bowls with tripodal or four-legged stands (cf. van den Brink, Rowan and Braun 1999:171ff.).<sup>1</sup> A rim or body fragment of a fourth basalt bowl (Fig. 1:3) is too fragmentary to be identified as either of the above-mentioned types. All preserved bowl rims are tapered and plain, indicating there was no incised chevron motif on their interior as is occasionally found on basalt bowls and, less frequently, on ceramic bowls (cf. van den Brink, Rowan and Braun 1999: n. 51; Chasan, van den Brink and Rosenberg 2019).

**Fig. 1 ▶**

No.	Type	Area	Square	Locus	Basket	Description and Measurements (in cm)
1	Flat-based bowl	B	3–4	204	2030, 2032	Large, dense basalt bowl with plain tapered rim and wide, flaring walls; rim diam. 39.5; height: 21.2; ext. base diam.: 17.5; int. base diam. 15; base thickness: 3; wall thickness: 2.5–2.9 near base and in mid-wall, and 0.9 near the rim
2	Flat-based bowl	A	Surface	99	1051	Medium-sized, dense basalt bowl with plain tapered rim and flaring walls; rim diam. 26.5–26.7; height: 12.1; ext. base diam. 13.5–13.7; int. base diam. 10; base thickness: 3.5; wall thickness: 1.0–2.7
3	Bowl	B	3–4	204	2007	Plain tapered rim and wall fragment of medium-sized basalt bowl; int. lower part of wall is smoothed; rim diam. 26; preserved height: 9.3; wall thickness: 0.9 (near rim)–2.6
4	Pedestaled bowl	B	3–4	210	2043	Tripodal bowl of very dense basalt, int. of base/wall very smooth, ext. exhibits two stumps where the legs were broken off and a small part of the third one; the area between the legs is also very smooth; small, single spot of soot stain; max. int. base diam. 15.9; max. ext. base diam. 14.2; max. base thickness: 4.1; wall thickness: 1.6–2.6; leg length: 4.1–4.6; distance between legs: 5.5–6.0

<sup>1</sup> Another tripodal basalt bowl was found *ex situ*, slightly north of the present excavation area by Gorzalczany (2000:43\*, Fig. 75; for the location of this site, see van den Brink, Golan and Shemueli 2001: Fig. 1:4).

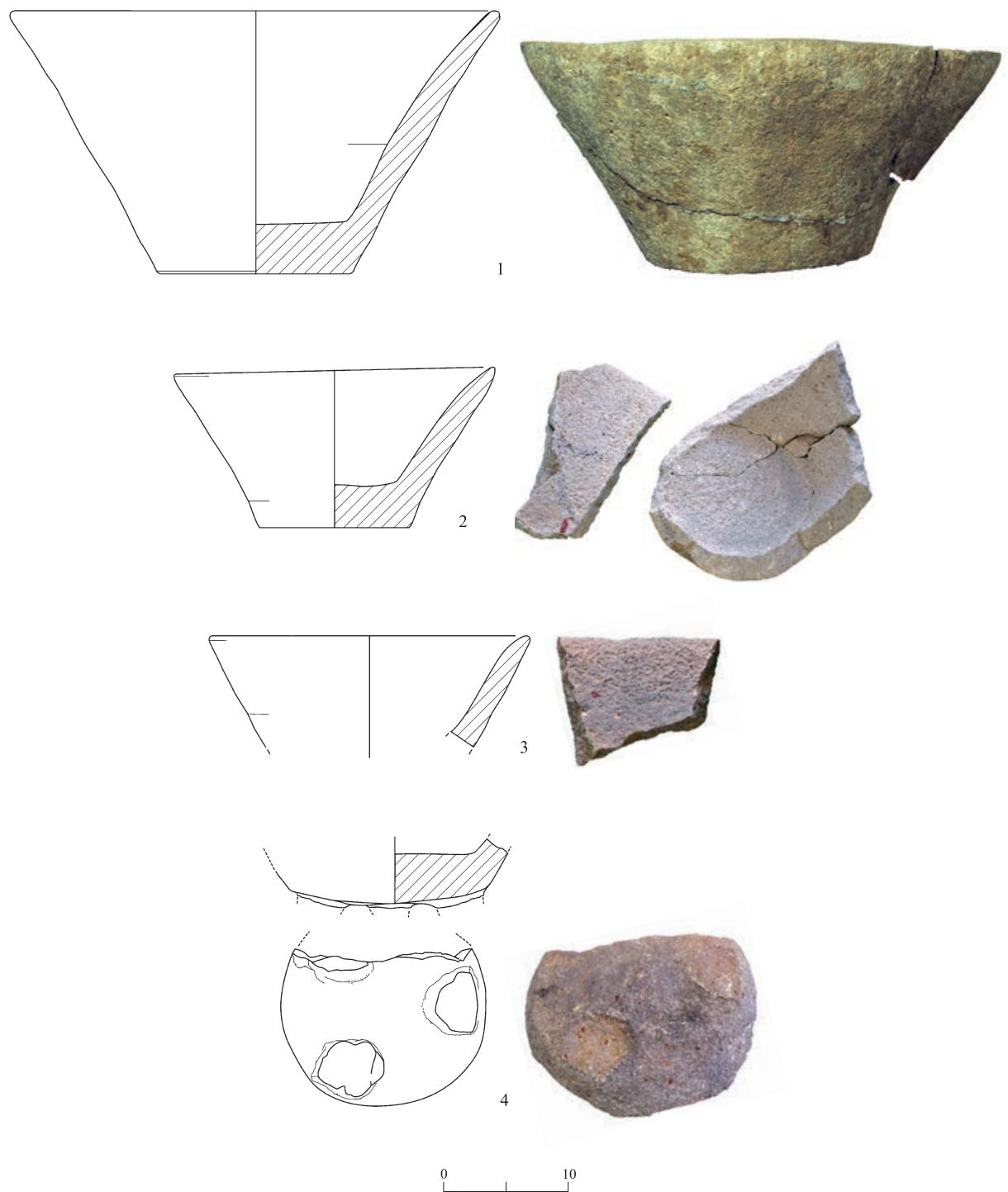


Fig. 1. Flat-based and pedestalled basalt bowls.

### *Grinding and Pounding Implements*

The fragmentary grinding implements in the assemblage (Fig. 2:1–4) include both grinding slabs and handstones, and indicate the agricultural nature of the site in early periods. These tools are made of highly vesicular basalt, quartzite(?) or beachrock that had been worked. They are of a type well-known from contemporary settlement contexts in the region (see, e.g., Gilead 1995:327–330).

Stone pestles like the one found at Or Yehuda (Fig. 2:5) are less common or less often identified as such, but they are not uncommon in contemporary contexts elsewhere.

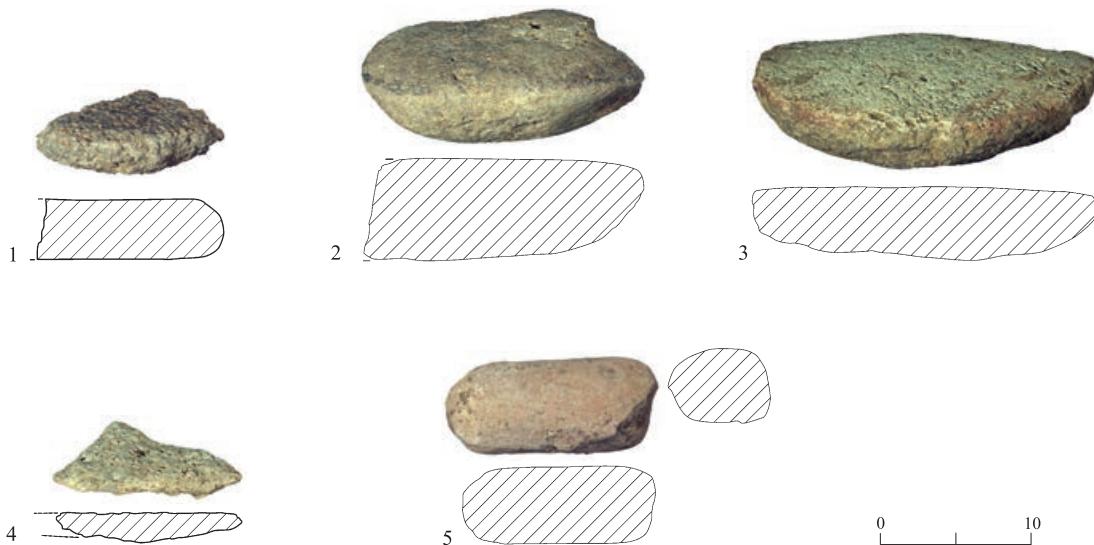


Fig. 2. Groundstone tools.

No.	Type	Area	Square	Locus	Basket	Description and Measurements (in cm)
1	Grinding slab	B	8	219	3074	Vesicular basalt flat grinding slab with rounded edge; both surfaces are smoothed/polished through use wear; dimensions: 12.3 × 9.8 (estimated original dimensions: 20 × 38); max. thickness: 3.6
2	Grinding slab	B	3–4	210	3015	Quartzite(?) grinding slab with rounded edge; the lower part is yellowish white, its upper part is dark, reddish with many white grits; dimensions: 22.0 × 16.5; max. thickness: 4; estimated original length: 40
3	Handstone	B	3–4	210	3051	Quartzite(?) handstone; dimensions: 17.0–18.0 × 13.4; max. thickness: 6.5; estimated original length: 36
4	Grinding slab(?)	B	7	218	3050	One face is slightly more smoothed out than the other, rough face; slightly triangular in shape; tapered edges; dimensions: c. 15 × 12; thickness: 1.5
5	Pestle	B	3–4	204	2039	Oblong, quartzite(?) pestle; reddish surface with many small white specks/grits; one side is flat and the other slightly rounded/convex; both ends (one slightly smaller in diameter than the other) are partially chipped, probably as a result of pounding; max. dimensions: 12.5 × 6.5; max. thickness: 4.5

## DISCUSSION

The present site is one of at least five Late Chalcolithic-period sites or that are clustered in the southeastern area of Or Yehuda (van den Brink, Golan and Shemueli 2001: Fig. 1:1–4, see nn. 1, 9). Our locality shares some similarities with two nearby sites, slightly to the north in Or Yehuda (Gophna, Taxel and Feldstein 2007:10; see van den Brink, Golan and Shemueli 2001: Fig. 1:1, 2). These two sites also yielded Late Chalcolithic-period pottery and basalt items, found resting on dark humus-rich soil, possibly swamp deposits, devoid of structural remains. These sites were interpreted by the excavators as campsite remains.

It seems unlikely that all the five above-mentioned excavation localities in Or Yehuda were part of a single site; it is more probable that each represents a short-lived occupation, reflecting the unstable living conditions that characterized this region. In antiquity, it was a swampy environment created by the shifting course of Nahal Ayyalon, which is now canalized.

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